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DATE:

REPLY TO
ATTN OF:

EM-453 (A. Rampertaap, 3-8191)

SUBJECT:

Comments on Draft Environmental Assessment Herbicide Weed Control in the
Remedy Acreage, Rocky Flats Plant, Golden, Colorado

TO:

F. Lockhart, RF

Attached please find comments by the Offices of Environmental Compliance (EH-22), the Office NEPA Oversight (EH-25), the Office of Environmental Quality Assurance and Quality Control (EM-20), and the Office of Southwestern Area Programs (EM-453) on the subject document. Please address these comments and modify the document accordingly by May 4, 1992, so that we may continue to process it for release.

Please contact me at 301-903-8191 if you have questions regarding this matter.

Clair Lesabman for

Autar Rampertaap
Rocky Flats/Albuquerque Production Division
Office of Southwestern Area Programs
Office of Environmental Restoration

Attachment

cc w/o attachment:
R. Greenberg, EM-453

5-12-92
mike Gujllamer,
please review +
FTR.
Bob

ADMIN RECCRD
SW-A-003952

Comments by EH-22, EH-25, EM-20 and EM-453 on the Draft Environmental
Assessment for Herbicide Weed Control in the Remedy Acreage,
Rocky Flats Plant, Golden Colorado, February, 1992

General Comments

1. This Environmental Assessment (EA) is confusing and internally inconsistent in its discussion of the Proposed Action and alternatives to it. For example, the Proposed Action consists of revegetation and weed-control actions, while the title states only weed control. In addition, the No-action Alternative actually consists of non-chemical weed control. The discussion of Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration consists of only revegetation actions. No discussion of other types of herbicides is provided.

The proposed action and alternatives to it should be more clearly defined.

2. Since the area that will be remediated is part of Operable Unit 3 (Off-site Releases) under the CERCLA Interagency Agreement (IAG), the EA should provide more discussion on the relationship between this action and the work to be done under the IAG. RFP should evaluate and ensure that the action planned here will not interfere with any long-term remedial activity at OU 3. *it won't*
3. The alternative of use of other herbicides or control measures than those recommended, and their pros and cons, should be discussed.

Specific Comments:

1. Page 1, Section 1.0, Second paragraph: The action proposed in this paragraph is confusing. The EA title indicates only spraying would be done, yet here and on page 5, the proposed action includes revegetation actions. However, the No-action Alternative includes only weed control. Similarly, page 7 (Section 5.2.1) discusses a revegetation alternative that is not weed-control in nature. The scope of the EA should be clearly stated and the document made internally consistent.

In the same paragraph, the scope of the action should be summarized more completely. The statement that actions would last a minimum of two years and maximum of five years is not consistent with the actions described in this paragraph, which cover a one-year duration. Are actions omitted?

2. Page 1, Section 2.1, second paragraph: The document indicates that 100 acres of the 350 being addressed ultimately are to be used for the expansion of Broomfield's Great Western Reservoir. Will these lands be excavated, and if so, why are we concerned (and incurring the costs) to revegetate with naturally-occurring species. Will there be health/environmental concerns later when the City expands

the reservoir? Discussion should be included on this point. The relationship of the project to the water supply protection grant project with the Cities should be discussed, also.

Page 1, Section 2.1, last paragraph (editorial): At the end of this paragraph, include a reference to Figure 1.

3. Figure 1 (Broomfield Acreage) and Page 3, Section 2.2, second sentence: The map indicates that the Remedy Acreage includes Broomfield acreage, while the text says that Broomfield has not requested treatment of its acreage. To correct this inconsistency, the map should note that Broomfield lands will not be treated.
4. Page 2, second complete paragraph: The statement that any remedial action can be modified by landowners and RFP raises the question, Is this EA such a modification of the landowner/RFP agreement? If so, will we need landowner approval as well? The subject action is part of a settlement agreement entered in litigation with surrounding landowners. It is being proposed because the original weed control measures, which were specified in the settlement agreement, did not work (p.3). There is no mention, however, of consultation with those landowners regarding the new proposed measures, or of their views on the matter. This is an important omission. Conceivably, those landowners might object to the new measures and consider them to be a violation of the settlement agreement, or at least to require a formal modification of the agreement. If consultation with landowners has occurred, please provide details. If it has not occurred, include plans to do so.
5. Page 2, eighth bullet, "Cover Crop": The cover crop seems to be listed as part of the existing agreement, but is listed later as an alternative (in section 5.2.2, page 7). Clarify.
6. Page 3, Section 2.2, first paragraph: Although remediation actions began in 1986, the remediation guidelines were not published until 1990. Can this be so? Either correct this error with the proper date or explain the apparent discrepancy in dates. In addition, there are two "EG&G, 1990" references given in the reference list (a and b). The text should indicate which reference was used.
7. Page 3, Section 2.2, bullets 2 and 5: We observe that the factors listed in bullets 2 and 5 will still be negative factors under the proposed action. New efforts will have to overcome their negative effects. There is the possibility that the proposed action will not be successful.
8. Page 4, top paragraph: The wording in this paragraph needs to be changed: change "will be" to "would be" to reflect the fact that the decision has not been made. Similarly, on page 6, first three paragraphs, the phrases "will be" should be changed to "would be" to reflect that this is a proposed action.
9. Page 4, Section 3.0: The purpose of this action is not correctly stated. The purpose of the action is to prevent the spread of

plutonium, mainly by preventing aerial resuspension but also through the prevention of water-caused soil movement. The establishment of vegetative cover is the means. Biological diversity and improved wildlife habitat are not DOE's purpose.

10. Page 4, Section 3.0, first paragraph, fifth sentence: The sentence needs to be modified to make its point correctly: delete "the prevention of" and "the suppression of" so that all impacts listed in this sentence are indeed adverse. In addition, the last (sixth) sentence in the paragraph can be deleted.
11. Page 5, first paragraph: The first and second programs, as listed, appear to be reversed in chronological order. The actions starting in August should come before those starting in November, unless they are in succeeding years, in which case the year should be stated.
12. Page 5, Section 4.1, third bullet: The reference to not using rangeland drilling appears to contradict the terms of the original agreement (page 2 of EA, ninth bullet). Consistent with Specific Comment 4, there may be the need to consult with landowners when altering conditions of that agreement.
13. Page 5, second paragraph and Page 11, Section 7.0: The reference "DOE, 1991" is not listed in the Reference section. Even though it is not yet released, it can be listed as "(in preparation)."
14. Page 5, Section 4.1, eighth bullet: Consider including this element in Section 4.2, Herbicide Program.
15. Page 6, Section 4.2, last paragraph: The statement is made that "the EPA will be notified" of the herbicides to be used. Rather than simply notifying the EPA, RFP needs to discuss the activity ahead of time and ensure that the regulators support the action. If this has been done, the EA should reflect that.
16. Page 6, first paragraph, last sentence: The phrase, "no likelihood of impacts" is too absolute. Extreme weather can occur, possibly producing impacts to Woman Creek drainage. Use a qualifier such as "very little."
17. Page 6, third paragraph: Insert the word "only" after "adjacent land." In addition, the low wind velocities referred to should be quantified. In addition, this discussion should also mention the wind speed that would cause spraying to be suspended, to avoid wind drift.
18. Page 7, Section 5.1, first sentence: We question the distinction made that "non-chemical" control of weeds constitutes the No-action Alternative. We believe mowing, grazing, and biological controls, when initiated for the purpose of controlling weeds, would constitute distinct "action" alternatives.
19. Page 7, third paragraph, last sentence: The two-year revegetation provision, stipulated in a 1985 document, suggests that DOE is

already late in meeting this provision. If this not true, provide explanatory text.

20. Page 7, fourth paragraph: The statement about goats preferring weed species needs a reference.
21. Page 7, section 5.2.2: Spring seeding of sorghum is supposedly an "Alternative Eliminated From Consideration", but appears to be part of the existing procedures listed on page 2, Cover Crop. Explain or correct this apparent inconsistency.
22. Page 9, section 6.2, first paragraph: The title of this section is Biota, but only plants are addressed. Animals, including fish, should be addressed. In addition, section 6.1, Soils, describes the soil complex as "generally unsuitable for cultivation," while section 6.2 states that the area was formerly cultivated with winter wheat. Please discuss this seeming inconsistency.
23. Page 11, section 7.1, first sentence: Different mowing techniques would cause different amounts of soil movement and therefore environmental impacts. For example, sickle cutters might cause less soil movement than rotary mowers. Add discussion of various mowing techniques as they relate to environmental impacts.
24. Page 11, section 7.1, last sentence: This statement should be more specific in the long-term beneficial impacts. The beneficial impacts are reduced resuspension and spread of plutonium. Modify statement accordingly.
25. Page 11, section 7.2 and page 12, third paragraph, last sentence: The statement on duration of the active ingredients (or lack of persistence) requires a reference.
26. Page 12, top paragraph: The statement that herbicides will be applied at the driest times of the year raises the question, "what if extreme weather occurs?" If it did rain heavily after application, could runoff result in fish kill, if not in streams on site, then downstream in reservoirs? The toxicities of the herbicide on native fish species should be presented because they relate to this point.

In addition, the statement on page 9, Surface Water (fifth paragraph, last sentence: "...runoff may be much higher for a short-duration, high-intensity event") adds concern to this point, if an extreme rainfall did occur after herbicide application.
27. Page 12, section 7.3: Clarify the statement on long-term beneficial impacts on soil: does it relate to all alternatives or just the proposed alternative?
28. Page 12, section 7.4: In the first sentence, insert "some of the species of" after "impact on." In addition, this section also needs to discuss impacts to wildlife in general. Earlier statements imply it would be positive. In addition, the statement is made that threatened/ endangered species are highly unlikely to be present.

Has the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed with this opinion? Has a survey been conducted?

In addition, the last sentence of this paragraph should be modified. Although Jefferson Co. may address prairie dog control under its land management program, this proposed activity would still affect prairie dogs (see page 5, bottom bullet: "Prairie dog suppression and control using toxigenic methods.") Suggested rewrite for last sentence: "This Environmental Assessment does not address the control of prairie dogs because Jefferson Co. has retained that responsibility..."

29. Page 13, Section 7.7: The concluding summary section states "potential impacts could occur to air quality and human health." Given that the current land use is primarily agricultural, public access to the area is restricted, and a commitment has been made to work only when winds are below 15 mph and to utilize dust suppressants and worker personal protection equipment, is such a statement accurate? If so, is this potential risk based on an accident scenario that was not discussed?
30. Page 13, section 7.5: A negative declaration on floodplains, i.e. that there are none (if true; otherwise, 10 CFR 1022 regulations apply) would be useful in this paragraph. In addition, in the second sentence, insert "and only" after "hand sprayers."
31. Page 13, section 7.6: The statement that herbicides would be applied on low-wind-velocity days should be quantified. In addition, the last sentence, referring to personal protection equipment used, seems to require elaboration and justification. Who will use this equipment and under what conditions?
32. Page 13, section 8.0: Under agencies consulted, has there been coordination/consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service or EPA? If so, please include them in this list.